

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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10-4-00

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Martin Roche - John Tait House

other names/site number Tait-Elston House

2. Location

street & number 3614 South Martin Luther King Drive not for publication

city or town Chicago vicinity _____

state Illinois code IL county 031 zip code 60653

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler 9-29-00
Signature of certifying official Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Enter as many boxes as apply)
[X] private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property
(Enter only one box)
[X] building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values: Contributing (1, 0, 0, 0, 1), Noncontributing (0, 0, 0, 0, 0).

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
roof Asphalt
walls Sandstone
Brick
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1888 - 1917

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Roche, Martin

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Holabird & Roche

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Chicago Historical Society - Original drawings of the Martin Roche - John Tait House. Martin Roche's Diaries.

Martin Roche - John Tait House
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing

1 16 448710 4630810

2 _____

Zone Easting Northing

3 _____

4 _____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lesley Gilmore/President, and Suzanne Germann

organization Gilmore Franzen Architects, Inc. date 5/1/00

street & number 949 Garfield Street telephone 708-386-4620

city or town Oak Park state IL zip code 60304

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Diane Heath

street & number 3614 S. Martin Luther King Drive telephone 312-328-9317

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60653

Martin Roche - John Tait House
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1

Martin Roche - John Tait House

The Martin Roche - John Tait House, built in 1888 at 3614 South Grand Boulevard (now known as Martin Luther King Drive), is situated in the middle of the block on the west side of the drive, between 35th and 37th Streets. Holabird & Roche designed this house for Martin Roche's brother-in-law, John Tait.¹ Roche lived there from 1888 to 1917. Its flat, Romanesque, sandstone front stands in sharp contrast to the adjacent Queen Anne limestone rowhouses. The three-story house was converted to a three-flat in the 1940's and was recently reconverted into a single-family residence. The exterior of the building reflects trends toward simplification of ornament while the interior epitomizes the exuberance of the Victorian period. Tiled fireplaces, intricately carved woodwork, paneled pocket doors, tall ceilings, stippled paint finishes, and an ornamental stencil frieze grace the first floor rooms with elegance. During the conversion to a three-flat, some of the original interior features were concealed. These were discovered during the recent rehabilitation, and in accordance with the rehabilitation goal of following the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, were preserved or restored. The exterior of the building remains unaltered.

The front facade is a juxtaposition of the heavy mass of red sandstone countered with numerous punched openings for large windows and doors. The random ashlar coursing, and rough stone face, of the sandstone produces a variegated, textured wall surface. This surface is broken by large single-piece stone lintels and by flat sandstone beltcourses, which delineate the floor levels. These beltcourses stress the width of the building. The third floor is further differentiated by a singular composition in which overhanging stone piers define the end of the wall, like the bartizans of a fortification. These piers contain a heavy frieze of stone arranged in a checkerboard pattern in which every other stone protrudes slightly from the adjacent piece. Engaged carved sandstone columns flank the four windows ganged together below this frieze. The parapet above is capped with an ornamental copper cornice, which has weathered to a green patina. The house has two flat roofs - one at the front three-story portion and another at the rear two-story section. Both roofs drain to exposed galvanized steel gutters and downspouts.

The main front entry, up a half-flight of concrete steps, was for the family and visitors, whereas the door to the side basement passageway was presumably for the servants and deliverymen. The machine-tooled stone on the chamfered face around the main entry accentuates the wide opening. A glazed transom above the oak panel door provides natural light to the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2

Martin Roche - John Tait House

entry vestibule. The front entry is further elaborated with the original ornamental wrought iron balustrade, which flanks the steps and the landing. The coil pattern of the balustrade is repeated in the exterior wrought-iron grilles of the basement windows. There are eleven wood double-hung windows on the front facade - two at the basement level; two at the first floor; three at the second floor; and four at the third floor.

The side walls are of common brick. The front (eastern) half of both the north and south sides are party walls with the adjacent buildings. The south wall steps in to allow light to the rear rooms. The south side has three windows at the basement level, four at the first floor, and four at the second floor. The west half of the north wall benefits from a jog in the wall of residence to the north. The light well provides natural daylight to four windows at the basement level; five at the first floor; three at the second floor; and one at the third floor.

The rear (west) elevation has two segments due to the jog on the south side wall. Both are constructed of common brick. The main portion, furthest west, is two stories high with a door and window on each of the upper floors. A new wood deck, which extends from the first floor, is accessed from the mudroom off the kitchen. The deck stairs lead to the backyard. A new balcony over the mudroom is accessed from a new door in the rear second floor bedroom. The wooden balustrade is composed of capped posts supporting the rails and balusters. The recessed west elevation of the third floor abuts the roof of the adjacent two-story section. A new casement window provides access from the third floor hallway to the second floor roof. The recent addition at the north side of the second floor roof provides the height necessary for the code-required second exit stair from the third floor. The secondary west elevation is narrow and recessed in the south light well. It is a full three stories high. Each of the three living space floors has a large wood double-hung window with a segmental brick arch and limestone sill. The basement elevation has a small double-hung window and a door to the side basement passageway.

The house is long and rectangular. The front three-story portion spans the full width of the lot, hence is two rooms wide. Roche supported this wide span of nearly thirty feet with steel pipe columns and steel beams at center span. This early use of steel structure in a residence is directly attributable to Roche's own experiments with steel in his designs for commercial structures. The rear two-story portion is narrow to accommodate the light well, hence is only one room wide. A narrow hall connects the rear and front portions. The main staircase is compressed into the north side of the front portion, divided into three flights per floor.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 3

Martin Roche - John Tait House

The interior is accessed, via a vestibule, through a wide oak door with raised panels. The vestibule has a marble threshold at each door. The south wall has built-in wood cabinets with a vertical beadboard interior. The vestibule floor is of a Greek key mosaic tile with a recessed marble slab in the center, presumably for a doormat. The first floor has an entry hall flanked by a reception room and stairway on the north and a double parlor on the south. The hall leads west to a dining room, which leads into the kitchen at the rear of the house. The doorways off the entry hall have wood paneled pocket doors - the wood type varies with the room: Red Oak in the entry hall, Birdseye Maple in the parlor, and Oak in the dining room. Open transoms with delicate spindles embellish the openings. The spindles establish a rhythm with saucers of alternating heights. The woodwork of all the first floor rooms is original, and has its original stain and varnish. The tongue and groove pine flooring and 10" high baseboards are typical throughout the house. All rooms are heated by original cast iron steam radiators with feet cast as rooks.

The reception room is a small room, which has a fireplace with a cast iron surround, wood mantelshelf with carvings, and a non-original ceramic tile hearth installed in the 1970s. It is entered through an opening off the entry hall. The original construction drawings for the house include details of a wooden grille with a spindle grid. Although the location for this grille is not identified in the drawings, it may have been intended for installation at the west wall, adjacent to the first floor stair landing. This open gridwork may have originally been constructed here, but removed during the conversion of the home to a three-flat. No evidence of this millwork was discovered during the recent rehabilitation.

The parlor is a long rectangular open space divided by wing walls. The originality of the wing walls, instead of pocket doors is supported by physical evidence in the framing, flooring, and decorative wall treatment. Both the east and the west parlors have fireplaces with wood mantels, mirrored over-mantels, encaustic tile hearths, and glazed ceramic tile surrounds. The back of the crazed ceramic tile identifies the tile maker as J. & J.G. Low of the Art Tile Works in Chelsea, Massachusetts, and the 1881 copyright. The designs of the fireplaces differ; both have some elaborately carved wood components, but are simple in massing and overall form. During the recent rehabilitation, historic stenciling was uncovered at the ceiling cove and the wall below the picture rail. Canvas covers the ceiling and the cove above the picture rail.²

The entry hall widens at the central staircase on the north

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 4

Martin Roche - John Tait House

wall. The original stair configuration was restored during this recent rehabilitation. The original first stair flight was moved from the reception room and rotated 90 degrees to its original location in the stair hall. The newel post, balustrade, and side wood paneling were replicated from extant pieces elsewhere on the stairway, and corroborated with interior elevations shown on the original construction drawings. An original powder room under the stairs is accessed from this area of the hall. The west portion of the parlor, and the dining room, are accessible through pocket doors in the south and west walls of this hall, respectively.

The dining room can be entered from the west parlor through a single door or from the hall through two pocket doors. The ceiling is coved similar to the treatment in the parlor. No stencil was uncovered at this cove. The original built-in china cabinet is intact - it is recessed into the west wall. This simplified Eastlake-style cabinet has beveled glass doors and a mirror at the back wall behind the serving counter. The top has spindles similar to the spindle screens of the transoms.

The kitchen was modernized recently but the structure was not altered. The kitchen incorporates the cabinetry remaining from the original butler's pantry. This pantry originally connected the kitchen to the dining room, and was significantly altered when the kitchen was divided during the three-flat conversion. A slate slab, once used as a base for the stove, remains intact. New strip maple flooring was laid to replicate the original, badly damaged, flooring uncovered during the recent rehabilitation. The walls have the original beadboard wainscot and the original window trim. The wainscot cap wraps around the window trim. There is a small mudroom off the rear of the kitchen that leads to the back deck.

The second floor originally consisted of four bedrooms, a bathroom, a sewing room, and a storage room. An opening was made in the wall between the two bedrooms at the front of the house to form a combined bedroom and sitting room. The north portion of the room has a fireplace with a wood mantel, glazed ceramic tile mantelpiece, and encaustic tile hearth. The bedroom doors have operable glass transoms. The original woodwork, with original stain and varnish, remains.

The third bedroom was originally separated from these rooms by two closets. One, belonging to the south bedroom, the other to the third bedroom. The closets were removed to create a hallway. The third bedroom is now a bathroom and walk-in closet. The master bathroom has a new high vertical beadboard wainscot with the original wood trim and picture rail. This entire front bedroom suite is granted privacy by an original

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 5

Martin Roche - John Tait House

louvered pocket door off the hallway.

The original bathroom is on this second floor. This bathroom retains its original bathtub and tile. The green ceramic tiles on the lower two-thirds of the wall, and the buff colored tiles on the top third of the wall and ceiling, have muted colors and matte glazes. A green ceramic cap tile with a leaf pattern separates the two colored tiles. Mirrors on the east and west walls are framed with white ceramic tile. Recesses, which originally contained shelves, flank the east mirror.

There is a storage room with built-in cabinetry across the hall from the bathroom. A staircase to the third floor was recently built to the west of, and over, this room. The room now has a sloped ceiling under the stair. There is an original window under the staircase.

The original sewing room was located west of the bathroom. The room was recently partitioned into a laundry facility and a closet. Bi-fold doors open the laundry area to the hallway. The clothes closet is accessed from the fourth bedroom at the rear of the house. This closet has a three-foot high beadboard wainscot.

The fourth bedroom has a new double-hung window and glazed wooden door on the west wall. The door accesses the balcony. All the wood trim and the pine floors have been retained in this room. The new window trim extends to the baseboard to match the original trim treatment. The trim originally had a clear finish; it is currently painted.

The back service stairway is north of the fourth bedroom. A closet east of the second floor landing was removed during the recent rehabilitation to build a continuation stairway to the third floor.³ The original wainscoting is on the walls of the staircase from the first to the second floor. Part of the stairway from the second to the third floor was built through the attic. Because the attic is a half-story, an addition was necessary at the rear of the house in order to provide proper headroom. A skylight provides natural light to the long stair run.

The third floor originally consisted of three bedrooms. The north front bedroom has an elaborate dentilated crown molding. Original detail drawings indicate that this was Martin Roche's bedroom. A marble sink and back splash are in a wooden cabinet in the northwest corner. The upper portion of the cabinet contains a three-sided mirror. The original finishes of the wood trim remain.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 6

Martin Roche - John Tait House

The south front bedroom has the baseboards and picture rail, with original clear finish, common to the rest of the house. There is a large walk-in closet off the southwest corner of the room. This closet was formed by dividing the third bedroom into three sections; two closets and a bathroom. The second closet is accessed from the hallway through the original entry to the erstwhile third bedroom. The bathroom is located at the west end of the hall. The original baseboards and window trim are intact on all original walls of the bathroom - they are currently painted.

West of the home's three-story portion is the attic of the rear two-story portion. The small hallway that allows entry to the rear staircase now has a casement window that accesses the roof.

The original wood finishes throughout the house are stain and varnish. The trim in the service areas and some secondary spaces has been painted. The current owner is staging the restoration of these original finishes. The tongue and groove pine floors have all been restored, sanded, and protected with tung oil. The floors were probably originally carpeted. Flooring was replaced in kind, in a few areas where it could not be salvaged. Concrete (2-4" thick) was removed from the floors of the first floor parlors, entry hall, and dining room, to expose the original wood flooring.

When the building was converted to a three-flat, the reception room was reconfigured to accommodate the first stair flight, which was relocated from the hallway. A closet was built at the original reception entry, and a new doorway was cut into the northern wall of the entry vestibule. A gypsum board partition closed the remainder of the stair off from the entry hall. Similar construction enclosed the stair for all three floors, and provided access to the apartments on each floor. Newel posts and balustrades were removed to accommodate the new construction. During the recent rehabilitation the original configuration was restored for the full height of the stair, re-opening the staircase to the living areas. Some of the balustrade components had been left on site by the previous owner; these were returned to their original locations and used as models for replica balustrades.

During the current rehabilitation, it was discovered that the doorway to the backstairs was originally located on the north wall of the kitchen. The steps tapered to turn the corner from the door to the straight run of stairs to the second floor. The stair is now a straight run, beginning at the mudroom. The stairs were altered and the door was covered with gypsum board by the previous owner to enable access without passage through the kitchen. The mudroom, and access to the rear stair, have

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 7

Martin Roche - John Tait House

been retained in this latter configuration.

The interior stairs to the basement are directly below the rear stair to the second floor. They are accessed from the northeast corner of the kitchen. The workroom directly below the kitchen retains the original beadboard wainscot that matches the original treatment of the kitchen. The mechanical room, storage space, and passage comprise the remainder of the basement area. The passage on the south runs the full-length of the building (under the parlors), connecting the front lawn with the rear yard. Doors at both ends of the passage and at the center, access the lawns and the basement, respectively. The steel pipe columns and steel beam are visible in the large storage area beneath the front rooms of the house.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 8

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Endnotes:

¹ Martin Roche's entries in his 1888 diary clearly illustrate that he designed the house.

² The stencil and canvas are being examined for paint and application type. Restoration will proceed accordingly.

³ The stairway extension was built to comply with building code regulations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 9

Martin Roche - John Tait House

The Martin Roche-John Tait House meets Criterion B for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is locally significant because it was the home of Chicago architect Martin Roche during his productive working years. The house was designed by Roche of Holabird & Roche, for his brother-in-law, John Tait, and included a suite of rooms in which Roche resided from 1888 to 1917. During this time period, Martin Roche was at the pinnacle of his architectural design career; Roche was a partner in Holabird (Simonds) & Roche from 1881 to 1927, when he died at the age of 72. He has been recognized as the premier designer of the firm and was responsible for the design of the following Chicago buildings, among others: the Tacoma Building, the Marquette Building, the south half of the Monadnock Building, the Old Colony Building, Soldier Field, and the Palmer House Hotel. Consequently, the house is integrally tied to the distinguished architectural firm of Holabird & Roche. The other buildings or office spaces closely associated with Holabird & Roche's operations have either been demolished or significantly altered.

The History of Holabird & Roche

Holabird & Roche was one of the most influential architectural firms in Chicago's history. The firm began with the partnership of William Holabird and Ossian C. Simonds in 1880. Holabird, Simonds, and Roche all began their architectural careers in the office of William LeBaron Jenney - Roche began in 1872, Holabird in 1875, and Simonds in 1878. Just a year after forming their own firm, Simonds was named superintendent of Graceland Cemetery. The partners realized that they needed to bring a third partner into the firm. Martin Roche was chosen for his strong design abilities.

Simonds remained with the firm until 1883, when he left to devote himself to landscape design and his work at Graceland Cemetery. The partnership of Holabird & Roche was well balanced with Holabird making the business contacts and bringing in the clients, and Roche designing the majority of the commissions. The first employee was hired in 1882. His tasks included everything from drafting to fetching coffee.¹

In the years 1884 and 1885, Holabird & Roche made acquaintances with several individuals involved in construction in Chicago who would play important roles in the development of the firm. Through Simonds the partners were introduced to Francis Bartlett of Boston. Bartlett originally commissioned Holabird & Roche to design a small one-story commercial building on Dearborn Street in 1884. In 1894, Bartlett had this building replaced with the Old Colony Building - a seventeen-story steel frame commercial structure designed by Holabird & Roche.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 10

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Their introduction to Owen Aldis, a real estate agent and developer, in 1884, was perhaps one of their most important. Aldis represented the Brooks brothers of Boston who would later become one of the largest developers in the Loop.² The Brooks brothers commissioned the firm to design several buildings in the 1890's, including the Pontiac Building (1884-1891), an addition to the Monadnock Building (1891-1893), and the Marquette Building (1891-1895). The developers previously had a standing relationship with Burnham and Root, who designed most of Brooks' earlier buildings. The switch to Holabird & Roche entered the firm into the ranks of America's largest and most successful architectural practices.³

Although the design of commercial buildings always dominated the work of the firm, Holabird & Roche continued to design small-scale projects even as they grew. As neighborhoods started to develop on the perimeter of Chicago, Holabird & Roche designed houses and apartments in Douglas, Hyde Park, Buena Park, Ravenswood, Evanston, Austin, and Oak Park.

In 1886 a minor commission for Chicago developer Wirt Walker led to one of Holabird & Roche's most important structures. This project evolved in 1888 into the design of the Tacoma Building, which has been considered one of the most prominent new buildings in the Loop at the time. This twelve-story building was a strong demonstration of the possibilities of metal skeletal framing on a large scale.⁴ An extension of William Le Baron Jenney's experiment with the Home Insurance Building, Holabird & Roche designed metal framing with thin cladding for the front façade of the Tacoma Building.⁵ The cladding was applied to more than one floor at once, which was a marked departure from the standards of masonry construction. Thomas Tallmadge stated, "...the Tacoma was the Columbus of skeletal construction."⁶ The design of the Tacoma Building provided tangible evidence that Holabird & Roche was experienced with large complex projects, enabling the firm to compete for the largest jobs in Chicago.⁷ Holabird & Roche's 1895 Marquette Building, with a complete metal frame construction, became the standard for all of their major office buildings.⁸

By the early 1890s, Holabird & Roche became one of the largest architectural firms in the country. The idea of a permanent large office run like a major business was not originated until after the Civil War. The earliest firms of this size developed in Boston and New York before the idea spread to Chicago. Holabird & Roche's size at the time - they employed up to 40 draftsmen - was surpassed only by Burnham & Root in Chicago and a few other firms nationwide.⁹ The expansion of the firm was consistent with the rate of construction in Chicago. Throughout the history of Holabird & Roche, the firm was almost consistently responsible for about five percent of the total

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 11

Martin Roche - John Tait House

construction recorded in the city.¹⁰ This percentage rose to 5-10% between 1901 and 1903, and 10% in 1908.¹¹

In the early twentieth century, the firm was commissioned to design hotels, department stores, and office buildings. The University Club was thought by many to be Roche's most accomplished work.¹² In 1904 Holabird & Roche received their first large-scale public commission - the Cook County Courthouse. This was the largest and most visible commission in Chicago at the time.¹³ Holabird & Roche won this commission after entering a design competition with an illustrious group of architectural firms including Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, Frost and Granger, and Jarvis Hunt.¹⁴

By 1910 Holabird & Roche was firmly established as one of the nation's leading firms, surpassing the level recorded by McKim, Mead, and White in New York, which had been, during the late nineteenth century, the largest American architectural firm.¹⁵ *The Economist* reported in 1909 that Holabird & Roche had 100 draftsmen working on designs that would result in an estimated \$30 million of construction cost.¹⁶

The firm expanded to such a size that it was impossible for the partners to have designed or have even closely supervised more than a few of the projects at a time. "Although there is good evidence that Martin Roche himself had a large part in the design of every important commission."¹⁷

Holabird & Roche and D.H. Burnham & Co. (known as Graham, Burnham & Co. in the 1920's) set the standard for office building construction throughout the Midwest and western United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸ Holabird & Roche was one of the boldest experimenters in Chicago, trying new techniques and materials and leading the profession in developing metal frame, riveted construction, deep basements, and integrated sprinkling systems. The firm was among the first to turn to the general contractor to construct its buildings. Program and budget were driving forces in the firm's goal to provide better buildings for less money. Straightforward plans and judicious use of ornament were hallmarks of the firm's designs.¹⁹

In 1913, after graduating from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Holabird's son John joined the firm with his classmate John Root - son of John Wellborn Root (of Burnham and Root). In 1917 the two young men were sent to Europe for military service during WWI. Upon their return two years later, the elders, now in their sixties, were ready to relinquish some responsibility to the younger generation. After 1918, the firm was, for the most part, run by the younger Holabird and Root. Although the younger generation was responsible for the firm in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 12

Martin Roche - John Tait House

the mid-teens, it was not until Roche died on June 4, 1927, that the name of the firm was changed to Holabird and Root.

Over the years, Holabird & Roche had four offices throughout Chicago. The moves were typically coincident with staff increases. In 1882 the firm of Holabird, Simonds & Roche moved into its first office in the New National Bank Building. This building, at 115 Monroe Street, was demolished in 1902.²⁰ In 1883, Holabird & Roche moved to the Montauk Building at 64-70 West Monroe. This office consisted of a twenty foot by thirty-five foot drafting room and a private office, all at the rear of the top floor. At ten stories, the Montauk Building, designed by Burnham and Root in 1883, was the first building in Chicago to rise substantially above the five or six-story plateau previously maintained by the largest commercial structures.²¹ The Montauk Block was demolished in 1902. In 1892, the firm moved their offices to the top (sixteenth) floor of the north half of the Monadnock Building. Holabird & Roche's design for the south half of the building was under construction at this time. The south end was Roche's office, separated from Holabird's office by a large library. A bookkeeper's office had enough space for drawing lay-out. The north end was the drafting foreman's office. The drafting room was in an L-shaped penthouse on the north and east sides of the roof.²² In 1912 the firm moved to a building of its own design for the first time - the Monroe Building at the southwest corner of Michigan and Monroe. The office occupied the entire fourteenth floor. They remained in this office until the late 1920's. The latter two buildings - the Monadnock and the Monroe - remain as office buildings today. Both of the Holabird & Roche office spaces have been remodeled beyond recognition.²³

Construction of the House

Martin Roche designed the house at 3614 South Grand Boulevard for his sister Bridget Louise and her husband John Tait.²⁴ Living in a suite of rooms on the third floor, Roche shared the house with the Tait's and their three children. Roche never married, and he became an integral member of his sister's family. Roche's diaries that survive from the years 1888 to 1917 tell of his personal and professional life during this time. Most entries are simple observations of his daily routine. However, entries from the years of construction of the "Tait" house tell of his visits to the site, as well as visits to the firm's project sites (such as the Tacoma Building).

Martin Roche began design of the house in January 1888. He and John Tait visited other houses in the neighborhood during the design process. The design, however, was markedly different from those of the immediate neighborhood. While the massing and the floor layouts are similar to the adjacent, contemporary, buildings, the front

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 13

Martin Roche - John Tait House

elevation is distinctive. The flat-planed, red sandstone-clad front façade stands out among the elaborately decorated Queen Anne greystones adjacent. The lack of porches, turrets, bays, variegated roof configurations, and protrusions, and the red color of the stone, is pronounced. Likewise, though not visible from the street, there were subtle functional differences in the interior configuration. The double-parlor was a large room undivided by pocket doors, with close access to a downstairs powder room. Exterior access was modified with an interior basement hallway connecting the front lawn to the exterior service yard. Similar to a narrow gangway, the hall was distinctly interior (private), with doors at both ends.

Roche's design for this house was coincident with his design for the houses at Fort Sheridan in Lake Forest/Highland Park, Illinois. The Fort Sheridan houses share some of the Romanesque character of the Martin Roche - John Tait House, but they are less plain and are free-standing. Roche was probably able to express his design direction more freely in the design of his family's home.

According to Roche's diary, he worked on the plans at home on Sundays and evenings. He and Tait reviewed the specifications in early April 1888, and received bids on April 12, 1888. The lowest bid for \$8,504.00 did not include the cut stone or the architect's fee. John Tait, who was a cut stone contractor, provided the cut stone work. In the ensuing days, the bid was reduced to \$7,700.00, and the carpentry work was let to William Mavor for \$3,100.00. Excavation was completed on April 25, 1888, and the concrete foundations were begun immediately.²⁵ Roche documented the project progress with almost daily visits recorded in his diary. In his August 2, 1888 entry he states that "he made first payment of \$232 for part-ownership of lot with J. Tait." Given the context, it is presumed that this reference is to the Martin Roche-John Tait House. Roche noted on October 19, 1888 that they had moved in and would sleep for the first time in the house that night. Later entries chronicle his involvement with the firm's projects, various birthday celebrations, attendance at shows, and travels throughout the United States.

Martin Roche, his sister Bridget Tait, and her daughter Margaret moved from the Roche-designed family home to an apartment at 4417 Drexel Boulevard in November 1917. This move was precipitated by the deaths of John Tait and his two sons, in 1911, 1915, and 1917, respectively. According to Roche's diary, the move may also have been motivated by Roche's concerns about the influx of African-Americans in the neighborhood. Roche subsequently moved to the north side of Chicago by 1923, when he was listed, in the city directory, at 420 Roslyn Place. Roche lived at these latter two addresses for short periods of time - six and four years respectively - after he'd retired from his architectural practice.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 14

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Roche transferred ownership of the Tait House to St. Vincent's Infant Assylum (sic) in 1927.²⁶ The asylum owned the house until 1940 when it was sold to a private owner.²⁷ The house was probably converted to a three-flat at this time, as this was typical in the neighborhood at the time.

The Douglas Neighborhood

The Douglas neighborhood's rich history originated with an Indian trail and evolved into one of the more established African-American neighborhoods in Chicago. The neighborhood is bounded by 26th Street on the north; Lake Michigan on the east; 35th Street from the lake to Vincennes, connecting to Pershing on the south; and the CRI & P railway tracks on the west. The first settlement in this area was formed by two Indian trails, which crossed at 35th Street. These trails, later known as Vincennes and Cottage Grove, were used by livestock herders to bring their animals to Chicago.²⁸ The area wasn't developed until the 1850s when Stephen B. Douglas purchased seventy acres along the lake from 31st to 35th Streets. The subdivision, Oakenwald, was developed to attract well-to-do residents south of the Loop. Senator Douglas hoped to develop the area with two distinct residential parks and a university. Douglas offered an area of his subdivision to the Baptist Church to establish a university. They accepted his offer in 1856 and formed the University of Chicago - the forerunner of the present University of Chicago. Unfortunately, due to financial troubles, the University closed its doors in 1886. During its successful years, the university attracted residential development to Groveland and Woodland Parks at Cottage Grove.

In the 1880s improved transportation modes made it possible for Chicago's upper-middle-class to move from the Loop to the southern neighborhoods. The Illinois Central commuter trains stopped at 35th Street with horsecar lines serving the major avenues. By 1881 a cablecar ran down State Street. In 1892 the South Side elevated trains were erected, with stops at 31st, 33rd, and 35th Streets.²⁹ Large single-family residences, of the Queen Anne and Romanesque style, began to appear along Dearborn Street, State Street, Wabash Avenue, Indiana Avenue, Grand Boulevard, and Michigan Avenue in the 1880's. Michigan Avenue's 3400 block became known as the "Avenue of Mansions." While the wealthy settled on the main streets, the middle class built homes along the side streets. In the December 29, 1888 issue of *The Economist*, investment in this neighborhood was described as follows:

One of the most marked features of the real estate market is the steady undercurrent toward the south and the realization of the advantages of this Section by shrewd investors. A large portion of the property between the buildings, and as far south as

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 15

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Washington Park, has quietly changed hands during the last year, and has been purchased by men who can afford and who intend to make this the choicest residence district in the city. Plans have already been drawn and approved for 20-30 handsome houses on Grand Boulevard, which are to be built during the coming year...³⁰

The exclusivity of this neighborhood was not long-lived. The elite society began to move to the Gold Coast on the north side of Chicago, or even further south, towards the end of the century.³¹

Both the Jewish and Irish communities that settled in this neighborhood built institutions in the 1890s. In 1892 the Irish built St. James Church at 29th Street and Wabash, and the De LaSalle Institute Boy's School at 35th and Wabash. In 1890 Adler and Sullivan designed Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv Synagogue, which was built at 33rd and Indiana. At the same time these communities were building institutions, African-Americans were moving south along the boulevards from the Loop to the Douglas area. In 1893 the Olivet Baptist Church built a new building at 27th and Dearborn. This black congregation, which held its first meeting in 1853, was originally located downtown. The congregation quickly grew and moved to the south side. Churches were considered instrumental in the development of what became known as the Black Metropolis, spiritually and socially. "Large congregations such as the one at Olivet Baptist...conducted extensive programs and helped secure lodging and employment for newcomers arriving from the South."³²

The African-American population grew in Chicago between the years 1850 to 1870 because the availability of industrial jobs provided an opportunity to flee oppression in the south. The population was concentrated in a near south side area bordered on the west by railyards and industrial tracts, on the east by affluent white residential neighborhoods, and stretched from Van Buren Street on the north to 39th Street on the south. This long narrow strip was referred to as the "Black Belt."³³

The period between 1910 and 1920 is often referred to as the "Great Migration" due to the number of African-Americans who left the south for wartime labor opportunities in the north. Chicago's African-American population increased 150 percent from 1910 to 1920.³⁴ The new arrivals first settled along Federal Street, turning the area mostly black. This migration expanded the once narrow Black Belt to the south and to the east. The intersection of 35th and State Streets became the center of Chicago's black community in the 1920s.³⁵ "The area contains a number of important buildings erected by and for the city's African-American community in the early decades of the twentieth century."³⁶

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 16

Martin Roche - John Tait House

The increased concentration of African-Americans in this neighborhood concerned many of the white families in the area. Societies were formed to discourage the settling of black families. Bombings in the late teens and early 1920s were directed at new Negro residents and real estate agents. Riots were not uncommon. Martin Roche chronicled the neighborhood's evolution in his diary:

Italian banker's house, 3710 Grand Boulevard blown up by members of the Italian "Black Hand" society at 5:45 this morning.³⁷

Called on Mrs. O'Brien and she would not sign agreement to keep colored people from living on Grand Boulevard.³⁸

The population of the Douglas community dropped over the next two decades. The ethnic middle class who could afford to leave the neighborhood moved further south to Washington Park. While the population decreased, the percentage of African-Americans increased from 74 percent in 1920 to 93 percent in 1940.³⁹ Unemployment rose after WWII when the stockyards and local steel mills started laying workers off. By the 1940's the Douglas area had become a slum and the old middle class homes were subdivided into apartments. At this time, more than 70% of the structures in the area around the Martin Roche-John Tait House had been built between 1885 and 1894. Of these, approximately 53% had been converted to apartments.⁴⁰

Throughout the 1940s, 50s, and 60s the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) began building housing projects, adding to the community's housing stock and replacing the Federal Street slums. The middle-class housing in the eastern part of the area has been replaced and by the 1980's middle-class professionals were renovating many of the old homes.⁴¹ Currently, new townhome developments are being built in the area. The two blocks of Martin Luther King Drive (originally Grand Boulevard) between 35th and 37th Streets -where the Martin Roche-John Tait House stands - are the most intact historic blocks in the area. The stately old brown- and grey-stones remain a visual reminder of the immediate neighborhood in which Martin Roche spent the majority of his professional life.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 17

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Endnotes:

- ¹ Robert Brueggemann, *The Architects and the City: Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 31.
- ² *Ibid.*, 32.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.
- ⁵ The rear and interior walls were of heavy masonry in order to accommodate the building's load and the wind load.
- ⁶ Thomas Tallmadge, *Architecture in Old Chicago* (Chicago, 1941), 197-99. In addition, the October 20, 1888 issue of *The Economist* marked that "There can be so much to please the eye in the simple brick and terra cotta, without the pretense of superficial ornamentation, which will be a revelation to many people. The effect is peculiarly light and airy, yet there can be no question of the strength of the structure."
- ⁷ Brueggemann, 99. (The Tacoma Building was demolished in 1929.)
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 174 & 180.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 181.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 174.
- ¹⁴ The complex inner workings and outcome of this competition are recorded in detail in Brueggemann, p. 341-345.
- ¹⁵ Brueggemann, 285.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 285. As a comparison, the office of McKim, Mead & White peaked at 100 employees in 1902.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 440 & 441.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 38.
- ²³ The Monadnock penthouse continues in use as an office for an architectural firm, WDW designs. Holabird & Roche's offices in the Monroe Building were also subsequently occupied by a different architectural firm. Schmidt, Garden & Erickson remained on the 14th floor until the recent dissolution of the firm.
- ²⁴ According to title document #837691, filed June 7, 1887, John Tait bought the property for \$4,710 from Thomas and MaryAnn Doolan.
- ²⁵ Martin Roche 1888 diary entries.
- ²⁶ Title document #9512647 dated January 4, 1927.
- ²⁷ Title document #12530329 states transfer of the property to Louis and Sophie Bein, as signed by five trustees of St. Vincent's Infant Assylum, dated July 1, 1940. It is of interest to note that in 1927 the firm Holabird & Roche designed a building at 701 N. LaSalle for St. Vincent's Infant Assylum. This would have been one of the last designs of the firm under that name.
- ²⁸ Dominic A. Pacyga and Ellen Skerrett, *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), 308.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 311
- ³⁰ *The Economist*, December 29, 1888.
- ³¹ Albert E. Dickens, *Grand Boulevard and Washington Park*, from *Forty-Four*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 18

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Cities in the City of Chicago (Chicago: The Chicago Plan Commission, 1942) p. 35.

³² Commission on Chicago Landmarks, *Black Metropolis Historic District* (Chicago: Department of Planning and Development, 1994), 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ Commission on Chicago Landmarks, 2.

³⁵ Pacyga, 313

³⁶ Commission on Chicago Landmarks and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, *Chicago Historic Resources Survey: An Inventory of Architecturally and Historically Significant Structures* (Chicago, 1996), III-270.

³⁷ Martin Roche diary, February 19, 1916.

³⁸ Martin Roche diary, September 12, 1917.

³⁹ Pacyga, 316

⁴⁰ Dickens, 35.

⁴¹ Pacyga, 318.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 19

Martin Roche - John Tait House

Bruegmann, Robert. *The Architects and the City: Holabird and Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

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Dickens, Albert E. *Grand Boulevard and Washington Park, from Forty-Four Cities in the City of Chicago*. Chicago: The Chicago Plan Commission, 1942.

The Economist, December 29, 1888.

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Pacyga, Dominic A. and Ellen Skerrett. *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986.

Roche, Martin. "Martin Roche Diaries 1888, 1899, 1902, 1910, 1916, 1917." Chicago Historical Society.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 20

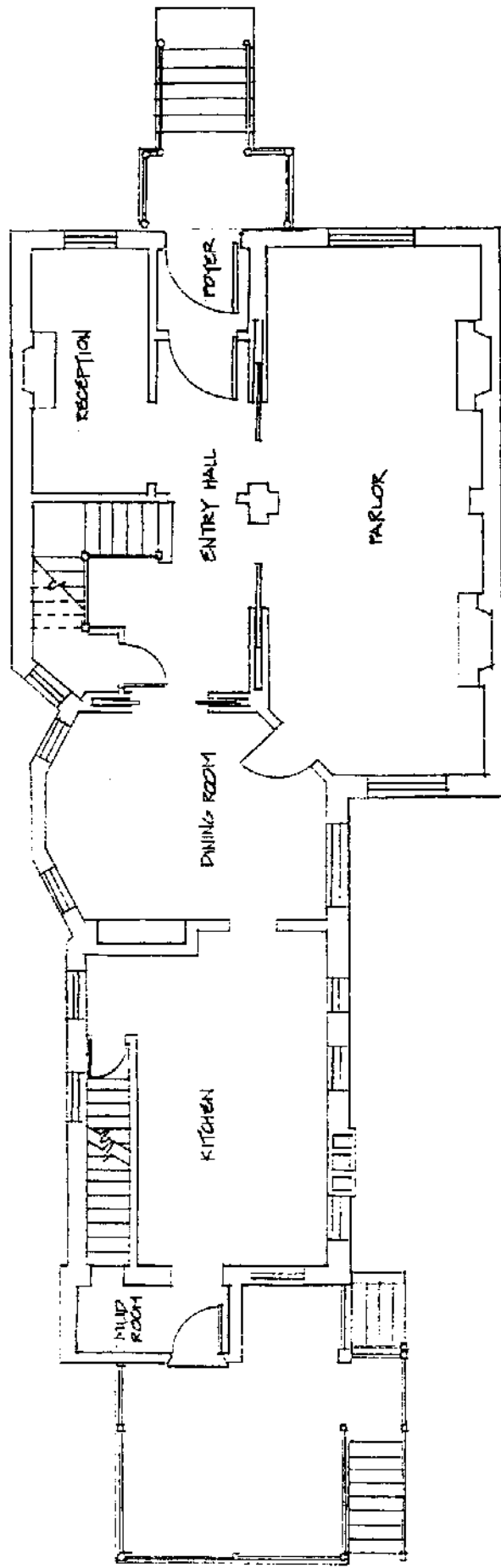
Martin Roche - John Tait House

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot 17 in Block 1 in Moody's Subdivision of the North half of the Southeast quarter of the Northeast quarter of the Southwest of Section 34 Township 39 North Range 14 East of the 3rd principal meridian situated in the County of Cook in the State of Illinois.

Boundary Justification:

This is the city lot historically associated with the Martin Roche-John Tait House.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
HOT TO ISSUE

MARTIN ROCHE - JOHN TAIT HOUSE
MARTIN ROCHE, ARCHITECT - 1988



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

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NOV 17 2000

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 11/06/00 THROUGH 11/10/00

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

ARIZONA, MARICOPA COUNTY, Irving School, 155 N. Center St., Mesa, 00001323, LISTED, 11/08/00
ARIZONA, MARICOPA COUNTY, Temple Historic District, Roughly bet. Mesa Dr., Broadway Rd., Hobson and Main Sts., Mesa, 00001321, LISTED, 11/08/00
CALIFORNIA, MARIN COUNTY, Lyford, Benjamin and Hilarita, House, 376 Greenwood Beach Rd., Tiburon, 00001268, LISTED, 11/10/00
FLORIDA, ORANGE COUNTY, Palm Cottage Gardens, 2267 Hempel Ave., Gotha vicinity, 00000982, LISTED, 11/07/00
GEORGIA, FULTON COUNTY, Western Electric Company Building, 820 Ralph McGill Blvd., Atlanta, 00001329, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, Alpha Delta Pi Sorority House, 1202 W. Nevada St., Urbana, 00001333, LISTED, 11/08/00 (Fraternity and Sorority Houses at the Urbana--Champaign Campus of the University of Illinois MPS)
ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Roche, Martin--John Tait House, 3614 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Chicago, 00001338, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Uptown Square Historic District, Roughly along Lawrence Ave., and Broadway, Chicago, 00001336, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, DU PAGE COUNTY, Peabody, Francis Stuyvesant, House, 8 E. Third St., Hinsdale, 00001330, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, JACKSON COUNTY, Hennessy, Cornelius, Building, 1023 Chestnut St., Murphysboro, 00001331, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY, Ely, Mrs. C. Morse, House, 111 Moffett Rd., Lake Bluff, 00001339, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, MERCER COUNTY, Ives, Gideon, House, 408 E. Jefferson St., New Boston, 00001332, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, VERMILION COUNTY, Building at 210-212 West North Street, 210-212 West North St., Danville, 00001334, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, VERMILION COUNTY, First National Bank Building, 2-4 N. Vermilion St., Danville, 00001335, LISTED, 11/08/00
ILLINOIS, WOODFORD COUNTY, El Paso Public Library, 149 W. First St., El Paso, 94000972, ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 11/07/00 (Illinois Carnegie Libraries MPS)
MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY, Worcester Bleach and Dye Works, 60 Fremont St., Worcester, 00001343, LISTED, 11/08/00
NEW MEXICO, EDDY COUNTY, Last Chance Canyon Apache--Cavalry Battle Site: LISTED DATE CORRECTION, Address Restricted, Queen vicinity, 00001230, LISTED, 10/24/00
PENNSYLVANIA, ALLEGHENY COUNTY, Consolidated Ice Company Factory No. 2, 100 43rd St., Pittsburgh, 00001348, LISTED, 11/08/00
PENNSYLVANIA, CHESTER COUNTY, Goshenville Historic District, Mainly along N. Chester Rd., jct. with Paoli Pike, East Goshen, 00001347, LISTED, 11/08/00
PENNSYLVANIA, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, Knipe--Johnson Farm, 606 DeKalb Pike, Upper Gwynedd Township, 00001346, LISTED, 11/08/00
PENNSYLVANIA, YORK COUNTY, McCalls Ferry Farm, 447 McCalls Ferry Rd., Lower Chanceford Township, 00001344, LISTED, 11/08/00
SOUTH CAROLINA, HAMPTON COUNTY, American Legion Hut, Jct. of Hoover St. and Jackson Ave., Hampton, 00001235, LISTED, 10/27/00
SOUTH CAROLINA, JASPER COUNTY, White Hall Plantation House Ruins and Oak Avenue, Address Restricted, Ridgeland vicinity, 98000423, LISTED, 10/27/00
SOUTH DAKOTA, AURORA COUNTY, Hilton House, Main St., White Lake, 00001352, LISTED, 11/08/00
SOUTH DAKOTA, MINNEHAHA COUNTY, Glidden--Martin Hall, 1101 W. 22nd Ave., Sioux Falls, 00001350, LISTED, 11/08/00
SOUTH DAKOTA, MINNEHAHA COUNTY, Jorden Hall, 1101 W. 22nd St., Sioux Falls, 00001349, LISTED, 11/08/00
TENNESSEE, KNOX COUNTY, Gibbs Drive Historic District, Gibbs Dr., Knoxville, 00001354, LISTED, 11/08/00 (Knoxville and Knox County MPS)
TENNESSEE, RUTHERFORD COUNTY, Providence Primitive Baptist Church, 256 Central Valley Rd., Walter Hill vicinity, 00001357, LISTED, 11/08/00
TENNESSEE, WILSON COUNTY, Spring Creek Presbyterian Church, Cainsville, Doaks Crossroads vicinity, 00001356, LISTED, 11/08/00
TENNESSEE, WILSON COUNTY, Watertown Commercial Historic District, Roughly along Main St., Depot Ave., and Public Square, Watertown, 00001353, LISTED, 11/08/00
TEXAS, MILLS COUNTY, Mills County Courthouse, 1011 Fourth St., Goldthwaite, 00001359, LISTED, 11/08/00
TEXAS, TRAVIS COUNTY, Austin Daily Tribune Building, 920 Colorado, Austin, 00001358, LISTED, 11/08/00
UTAH, SALT LAKE COUNTY, Cushing, Arthur and Ellen, House, 123 E. Pioneer, Sandy, 00001304, LISTED, 11/06/00 (Sandy City MPS)
UTAH, SALT LAKE COUNTY, Dowding, Hannah Nash, House, 8830 S 60 E, Sandy, 00001305, LISTED, 11/06/00 (Sandy City MPS)
UTAH, SALT LAKE COUNTY, Dowding--Rasmussen House, 98 E. Main St., Sandy, 00001306, LISTED, 11/06/00 (Sandy City MPS)
UTAH, SALT LAKE COUNTY, Jensen, Amos and Ida, House, 387 E 8800 S, Sandy, 00001307, LISTED, 11/06/00 (Sandy City MPS)